

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.

MAINTAINING INTEROPERABILITY WITH SMALLER ASIAN-PACIFIC NATIONS  
THROUGH EFFECTIVE THEATER ENGAGEMENT

By

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College, the Department of the Navy, or the United States Coast Guard.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

16 May 2000

**DNIC QUALITY INSPECTED 4**  
**20000914 046**

<b>1. Report Security Classification:</b> UNCLASSIFIED			
<b>2. Security Classification Authority:</b>			
<b>3. Declassification/Downgrading Schedule:</b>			
<b>4. Distribution/Availability of Report:</b> DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.			
<b>5. Name of Performing Organization:</b> JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			
<b>6. Office Symbol:</b>  C		<b>7. Address:</b> NAVAL WAR COLLEGE 686 CUSHING ROAD NEWPORT, RI 02841-1207	
<b>8. Title (Include Security Classification):</b> MAINTAINING INTEROPERABILITY WITH SMALLER ASIAN-PACIFIC NATIONS THROUGH EFFECTIVE THEATER ENGAGEMENT (U)			
<b>9. Personal Authors:</b> John A. Schott, Captain, U.S. Coast Guard			
<b>10. Type of Report:</b> FINAL		<b>11. Date of Report:</b> 16 May 2000	
<b>12. Page Count:</b> 24		<b>12A Paper Advisor (if any):</b>	
<b>13. Supplementary Notation:</b> A paper submitted to the Faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.			
<b>14. Ten key words that relate to your paper:</b> interoperability, engagement, theater, Pacific Command, planning, training, Coast Guard, Special Operations Forces, communications, exercises			
<b>15. Abstract:</b> This paper examines the prospects for maintaining interoperability with smaller coastal nations of the Asia-Pacific region through peacetime military engagement. Drawing on examples from Southern Command as well as Pacific Command, the author argues for continued engagement with these smaller nations, focusing on preparations for military operations other than war (MOOTW). This approach has the potential to improve interoperability at the low end of the spectrum, where we are most likely to work with coalition partners in operations such as noncombatant evacuation, maritime interdiction, protection of vital shipping lanes, and other missions important to national security. A larger "low-end" contribution by coalition partners will enable our primary combatants to focus on their war-fighting mission. Research revealed that CINCPAC is conducting varied and aggressive engagement efforts with many nations in his Area of Responsibility. Chronic problems with incompatible communications appear to be a significant obstacle to interoperability with potential coalition partners in the region. The U.S. Coast Guard, Special Operations Forces, and the National Guard's State Partnership Program offer CINCPAC cost-effective tools for a sustainable engagement program.			
<b>16. Distribution / Availability of Abstract:</b>	Unclassified  X	Same As Rpt	DTIC Users
<b>17. Abstract Security Classification:</b> UNCLASSIFIED			
<b>18. Name of Responsible Individual:</b> CHAIRMAN, JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			
<b>19. Telephone:</b> 841-6461		<b>20. Office Symbol:</b> C	

## **Abstract**

This paper examines the prospects for maintaining interoperability with smaller coastal nations of the Asia-Pacific region through peacetime military engagement. Drawing on examples from Southern Command as well as Pacific Command, the author argues for continued engagement with these smaller nations, focusing on preparations for military operations other than war (MOOTW). This approach has the potential to improve interoperability at the low end of the spectrum, where we are most likely to work with coalition partners in operations such as noncombatant evacuation, maritime interdiction, protection of vital shipping lanes, and other missions important to national security. A larger “low-end” contribution by coalition partners will enable our primary combatants to focus on their war-fighting mission.

Research revealed that CINCPAC is conducting varied and aggressive engagement efforts with many nations in his Area of Responsibility. Chronic problems with incompatible communications appear to be a significant obstacle to interoperability with potential coalition partners in the region. The U.S. Coast Guard, Special Operations Forces, and the National Guard’s State Partnership Program offer CINCPAC cost-effective tools for a sustainable engagement program.

## **Introduction**

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has come to rely on the help of allies and coalition partners to respond to a wide array of crises, from disaster relief to peacekeeping to significant hostilities like Operation DESERT STORM. Peacetime military engagement has evolved during this period into a major element of U.S. strategy, aimed at shaping the international security environment to avert these crises and to foster strong working relationships with military counterparts around the world. However, as the U.S. continues to push the high-tech frontiers with Network Centric Warfare and other innovations, we risk losing interoperability with the militaries of many smaller, less wealthy nations. Furthermore, in an era of tight budgets, shrinking forces, and high operational tempo, some would argue that we cannot afford a full-blown peacetime military engagement program. In their view, we should channel our resources to a few high-priority, pivotal states.<sup>1</sup> This paper examines one regional segment of this issue—the prospects for maintaining military interoperability with the smaller littoral nations of the Asia-Pacific region. The thesis of the paper is that there are important reasons to continue engagement efforts with these “lower priority” nations, and that there are affordable ways to preserve interoperability with them. Carefully tailored theater engagement, emphasizing communications and basic skills applicable to military operations other than war (MOOTW), can enable the Regional Unified Commander to maintain effective working relations with these small but strategically important countries.

### **The Case for Engagement with Smaller Asian-Pacific Nations**

The end of the Cold War showdown with the Soviet Navy, the closure of American bases in the Philippines, heavy reliance on CINCPAC forces in the Persian Gulf, and cuts in

the Pacific Fleet have all reduced the presence of U.S. forces in the Pacific and may create a perception of reduced U.S. commitment to the security of the region.<sup>2</sup> Robust theater engagement is a means to offset this perception, enhance regional economic and political stability, and at the same time derive benefits for our own forces. Engagement provides valuable opportunities to gain familiarity with important locations where U.S. units may someday be sent in response to a crisis. For example, U.S. Navy ships working with Malaysian forces in last year's Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training exercise (CARAT 99) found significant variances between Malaysian, British, and U.S. charts of the area.<sup>3</sup> This is just one small illustration of the valuable local knowledge to be gained in the varied operating environments made accessible by engagement. Thanks to engagement exercises, our forces have access to firing ranges, amphibious landing sites, and a multitude of other training opportunities that could not be duplicated in U.S. territory alone.

Describing the benefits of theater engagement, the National Military Strategy points out that "laying a solid foundation for interoperability with our alliance and potential coalition partners is fundamental to effective combined operations."<sup>4</sup> "By increasing understanding and reducing uncertainty, engagement builds constructive security relationships, helps to promote the development of democratic institutions, and helps keep some countries from becoming adversaries tomorrow."<sup>5</sup> Peacetime military engagement efforts also "preserve our access to important infrastructure, position our military to respond rapidly to emerging crises, and serve as the basis for concerted action with others."<sup>6</sup>

Many would agree that China is the most likely emerging peer competitor facing us in the early decades of the twenty-first century. Proactive engagement with the nations of the Asia-Pacific region may deter Chinese efforts to expand their influence through military

means. Combined with diplomatic and economic instruments of national power, theater engagement can help keep other nations on “our side” if a more openly confrontational U.S.-China relationship develops. Our expeditionary military relies on access to airfields, ports, and staging areas in the theater of operations. Engagement efforts today can help make this access available if it is needed in the future. This is especially important considering the challenges posed by the vast distances of the Pacific.

Even if confrontation with China never develops, there will still be many events in the Western Pacific that will impact U.S. national security and lead to military involvement. Interoperability with the militaries of the region’s smaller littoral states can pave the way to successful coalition peacekeeping operations (as in East Timor), humanitarian assistance/disaster relief missions, cooperation in drug and migrant interdiction, enforcement of economic sanctions, and other efforts important to our national interests. This vital interoperability will atrophy unless it is continually exercised through peacetime military engagement.

### **CINCPAC’s Theater Engagement Plan**

The National Military Strategy defines peacetime military engagement as “all military activities involving other nations intended to shape the security environment in peacetime.”<sup>7</sup> As directed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC has developed a detailed Theater Engagement Plan to help coordinate the planning and execution of engagement efforts seven years into the future. Although many details are classified, Pacific Command’s plan covers the full array of engagement programs, including 1) Operational Activities (such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement, humanitarian relief, sanctions enforcement, and counterdrug operations), 2) Combined Exercises, and 3) Other Foreign Military Interaction

(combined training, combined education, military contacts, security assistance programs, humanitarian assistance programs, and other activities).

This large selection of engagement activities has to be meshed with the diverse needs and interests of the many nations in the theater. Coordinators on CINCPAC's staff strive to tailor the type, amount, duration, and level of complexity of the engagement events to best fit the engaged nation's circumstances. This is not easily accomplished and is complicated greatly by the highly fluid nature of operational scheduling, political shifts, and other factors. Despite the challenges, CINCPAC conducts a vigorous engagement program throughout his massive area of responsibility (AOR), with several hundred varied events each year.

The primary annual maritime component of the Pacific Command's plan is the CARAT series of bilateral exercises in which U.S. forces train with counterparts from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Brunei. Participation varies each year depending on political factors and other considerations. The exercise seeks to demonstrate U.S. commitment to security and stability in Southeast Asia, increase the readiness of U.S. forces, and promote interoperability with regional friends and allies through a wide variety of operational training events. The CARAT exercises illustrate one of the key challenges of interoperability—effective communications.

#### **Communications—The Foundation of Combined Operations**

CARAT 99's Task Force Commander assessed last year's event as a success in reinforcing military interoperability and demonstrating the viability of combined operations. However, the after-action report highlighted communications as the most significant shortcoming of the exercise:

OBTAINING SATELLITE ACCESS AND UHF/VHF/HF FREQUENCY  
ASSIGNMENTS FOR COMPLANS FOR SIX DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND

CARAT TG IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS (BETWEEN PHASES) WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. COMDESRON ONE WAS FRUSTRATED IN ATTEMPTS BY THE FACT THAT ORIG DOES NOT HAVE STANDING FREQS AND COMMLAN FOR CARAT, MANY COUNTRIES HAVE ANTIQUATED COMM REQUIREMENTS EXPRESSED IN DECADE OLD STANDARD EXERCISE PROCEDURES, AND MANY COUNTRY COMMLANS DO NOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE FREQS TO ACCOMMODATE SURFACE, SUBSURFACE, P-3C, HELO, AMPHIB/USMC, MCM/PC, NSW REQUIREMENTS.<sup>8</sup>

These problems occurred despite a major planning effort and at least four previous years of bilateral exercise experience to build upon. If this is the case with scheduled events, it is logical to conclude that communications would be an even larger problem during real-life contingencies, especially those involving several of the region's militaries that do not participate in CARAT. Not surprisingly, the language barrier presents another set of problems. The CARAT Task Force reported that this significantly impacted operations with Thailand and Indonesia, even restricting the capability for bridge to bridge communications between ships steaming together.

Southern Command's UNITAS, a decades-old annual exercise with South American navies, has faced similar problems with communications incompatibility. Standard practice there has been to temporarily crossdeck communications and crypto equipment to South American ships. An American Communications Assistance Team installs the equipment and provides a shiprider to assist with operation.<sup>9</sup> However, while this may be an acceptable temporary solution during well-established exercises with larger ships, it may not be workable for unplanned contingency operations when equipment and technicians might not be available. Given the importance of reliable communications to operations at all levels on the threat spectrum, this chronic problem seems to demand a more comprehensive solution, rather than further stopgap measures. For instance, development and multi-national



distribution of U.S. standard communications gear could significantly improve interoperability during both planned and unplanned operations.

The alternative is that the problem of communications incompatibility will grow worse as nations buy non-standard equipment from a variety of sources. Moreover, the relationships formed in supplying and supporting equipment are an important part of engagement, and we could lose ground here if we are not proactive. As seen in UNITAS, this goes beyond the issue of communications systems:

Interoperability and closer navy-to-navy relationships have been hampered by South American purchase of non-United States' built ships and equipment and the development of indigenous arms industries. This trend caused not only incompatibility in ammunition, spare parts and logistics, but South American naval personnel are increasingly receiving their technical training and assistance in or through countries supplying the ships and equipment. As a result, the junior and middle grade officers do not have the same relationship nor identification with the United States and United States Navy that their seniors do.<sup>10</sup>

The Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), and Excess Defense Articles (EDA) programs have a big impact on military engagement efforts and equipment interoperability in a CINC's theater. These programs are managed primarily by the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), with the participation of Security Assistance Officers assigned to U.S. embassies in many countries. There is a potential for coordination problems since these initiatives are not controlled or funded by the Unified Commander. Often, the CINC's staff learns after the fact of DSAA funding allocation and planning decisions.<sup>11</sup> Earlier and more extensive CINC staff involvement in this process might improve the prospects for crafting a cohesive regional communications system.

### **Tailored Engagement--Getting the Right Fit**

The simple truth is that the Argentine army had no conception of how to fight a war against a major enemy. Their American training had taught them to rely too heavily on resources rather than human endeavor. An SAS officer remarked during the campaign

on the problem that afflicts many Third World armies, of concentrating on acquiring expensive technology rather than applying basic training and skills.<sup>12</sup>

As the Argentines found in the Falklands War, the “American way of war” is not necessarily the right approach for a smaller nation that lacks the United States’ vast resources and technological advantages. Our engagement efforts are a powerful influence in shaping the militaries of our Asian-Pacific counterparts. It is important to realistically assess their capabilities and continuously tailor exercises and training to meet their needs and help them shape effective, professional, sustainable forces. One size does not fit all. For instance, the CARAT 99 Task Force, prepared for rigorous at sea training, found that Royal Brunei Navy ships are not manned to sustain 24-hour underway periods, making it impossible to conduct extensive offshore operations.<sup>13</sup>

Careful tailoring is needed even for classroom training. Recent SECDEF guidance regarding international military legal training is relevant to many other areas of theater engagement. The Secretary’s message states that the proliferation of training programs and events can result in inefficiency and duplication of effort. He calls on the Services, National Guard units, and other providers of training to coordinate closely with unified commands and country teams to ensure each country’s education and training needs are met as efficiently as possible. Geographic CINCs are directed to ensure that training is structured to support CINC engagement strategies, that “successive training visits build on one another or service different audiences, and that the training contemplated is appropriate to the country receiving the training, e.g., UCMJ training may not be appropriate for countries that do not have a military justice system.”<sup>14</sup>

The fundamental issue in planning tailored engagement is the future role of the engaged nation's forces. For instance, will they have a "blue water navy" or a coast guard? How can these forces best contribute to regional stability and mutual security?

### **Shaping Friendly Forces for a Role in MOOTW**

As we enter the second decade of the post-Cold War era, many challenges face our armed forces. The National Military Strategy forecasts a multi-polar world filled with regional, asymmetric, transnational and "wild card" threats on the lower end of the spectrum of conflict—concerns such as terrorism and drug trafficking, the spread of dangerous technologies, failed states, and massive refugee flows. At the same time, the U.S. military must be prepared, at the high end of the threat spectrum, to fight and win two nearly simultaneous major theater wars. Some fear a loss of focus and readiness with the recent emphasis on MOOTW missions. One promising way to approach this dilemma is to maximize the ability of partner nations to handle the lower threat problems.

Emphasizing preparation for MOOTW rather than major theater war offers several advantages for smaller nations. With less need for high cost weapons systems, this approach is more affordable and thus more sustainable for emerging states. It gives them forces that will meet important national peacetime needs, and a military role in which they can make a legitimate contribution as a valuable force multiplier in a coalition.

From the U.S. perspective, when developing CINCPAC's Theater Engagement Plan there are several reasons to focus engagement activities at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. This approach enables us to promote stability in the region by shaping smaller, less offensively oriented forces. Much of the U.S. training for these forces can be accomplished by smaller, less costly teams. Reducing the engagement role of our high-end naval

combatants would help contain costs, ease operational tempo, and allow our frontline warfighters to concentrate their efforts on major conventional capabilities. This approach may become a matter of necessity as U.S. forces evolve in the coming decades. For example, despite the growing MOOTW threat, the composition of the U.S. Navy is moving toward fewer, more-capable surface ships.

As the FFG-7 frigates are removed from active service (by 2015), the Navy will be left with a surface force that consists largely (or completely) of high-capability Aegis-equipped ships. These ships will be larger and considerably more capable than the frigates. Hence, the result is a force that is more appropriate for operating against high-end threats than against those at the low end.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, there is an emerging gap in mission needs and capabilities. Trends indicate an increase in demand for forces capable of responding to MOOTW, but the number of Navy surface combatants suited to perform these missions is declining.

### **The U.S. Coast Guard's Role in Engagement**

Expanded use of U.S. Coast Guard capabilities may offer CINCPAC a means to provide robust engagement with smaller littoral nations of the Pacific Theater, despite the limitations on Navy fleet availability. A Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Defense and the Department of Transportation defines specific national defense missions for the Coast Guard, including a role in peacetime military engagement:

As a multi-mission law enforcement, humanitarian, and regulatory agency, as well as a military service, the Coast Guard is well-suited to perform maritime engagement roles. Traditional missions performed by Service personnel, training teams, cutters and aircraft position the Coast Guard as a 'model maritime service' for emerging democratic nations. Coast Guard personnel and platforms can support the development of stable, multi-mission maritime services responding to emerging transnational threats. Coast Guard engagement activities can also reach beyond normal military-to-military relations to a broader host nation maritime audience.<sup>16</sup>

A recent visit to Malaysia by a Coast Guard law enforcement training team illustrates the ability to reach a broad, interagency audience in host nations. In conjunction with

CARAT '99 events, the team trained 55 students, mostly from the Malaysian Navy, but also representing the Fisheries Service, Customs, Marine Police, and Environmental Protection Service.<sup>17</sup> The Coast Guard also conducts engagement visits with some of the small island nations in the Pacific. For instance, a Coast Guard buoy tender and patrol boat from Guam conduct biannual engagement visits with the Republic of Palau's single patrol vessel, which is responsible for protecting the nation's huge Exclusive Economic Zone. In addition to operational training in law enforcement and other coastal missions, the U.S. representatives help the Palau vessel with vital engineering maintenance. For Palau and many places like it, Coast Guard visits may be their only contact with the U.S. military.

The ever-increasing complexity and specialization of Navy weapons systems limits the ability of Coast Guard units, and of similar allied or coalition platforms, to operate effectively with the U.S. Navy in a high-threat environment. However, the Coast Guard and comparable friendly foreign forces have capabilities that can complement high-end combatants, especially in the MOOTW arena. Along with many peacetime duties that promote national security, such as maritime law enforcement, refugee control, maritime search and rescue, and disaster relief, the Coast Guard is also tasked with Naval Coastal Warfare responsibilities. These include Maritime Interception Operations, Harbor Defense, Port Safety, and Environmental Defense. Many of these missions apply across the threat spectrum and would be valuable, suitable roles for properly trained forces from coalition partners. Since U.S. forces may need to respond to several simultaneous crises across the threat spectrum, it makes sense to use less capable U.S. or coalition platforms for vital but lower threat missions not requiring the most sophisticated weaponry.

While this paper focuses primarily on the importance of effective engagement with smaller nations, it is worth noting that engagement at the low end of the spectrum of conflict can pay dividends even when dealing with potential peer competitors. For example, the U.S. Coast Guard has had regular interaction for several years with Russian Border Guard forces in the North Pacific and Bering Sea. The two maritime forces have often exchanged visits, conducted exercises, and cooperated in fisheries enforcement and in search and rescue efforts. Similarly, the Coast Guard has worked with People's Republic of China officials to enforce the UN General Assembly Resolution regulating drift-net fishing in the far reaches of the North Pacific. The Coast Guard has embarked Chinese enforcement officers on most of its cutters assigned to the mission. Efforts like this, while modest by themselves, can provide important building blocks and working-level contacts for broader cooperation and conflict resolution.

### **Special Operations Forces**

Another valuable asset for providing affordable, well-tailored engagement training to small nations is Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOCPAC). As the Special Operations Forces (SOF) component command in the theater, SOCPAC conducts peacetime engagement and helps build force interoperability through activities such as de-mining, counter-drug operations, bilateral exercises, and an extensive Joint/Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program.<sup>18</sup> "Southeast Asia remains one of the world's largest drug producing areas. SOF assist host nations in improving their capability to deal with this significant problem. Specifically, SOF conduct training to improve planning, expertise, and small unit tactics of host nation military and law enforcement agencies to increase their ability to battle narco-criminals."<sup>19</sup> This can have a great impact on preserving regional

stability against the powerful corrupting forces of international drug cartels. The JCET program includes valuable professional exchange of skills between various SOF elements and their host nation counterparts, plus numerous humanitarian/civic action projects. With the flexibility to operate across the spectrum of military operations, SOF can tailor the nature and size of events to meet host nation needs and capabilities. Reaching 22 countries in the Pacific Theater in 1997, SOF efforts demonstrate the ability of small, relatively affordable military training teams to have a significant impact in shaping the AOR.<sup>20</sup> In addition to providing valuable services to friendly host nations and supporting regional stability, SOF gain tremendous exposure to areas in which they may someday need to perform vital military missions.

### **Reserve and National Guard Resources**

Reserve and National Guard forces offer additional possibilities for tailoring engagement to the needs of smaller nations. With their corporate knowledge and continuity, these forces can build on previous engagement efforts, develop expertise in a country, and establish valuable personal relationships with the leadership.

The value of an ongoing engagement program using Reserve forces was demonstrated during Operation Strong Support in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in Central America. "CA (Civil Affairs) quickly became the focal point for coordination between the JTF and numerous HN (Honduran) government and non-government organizations, as well as international relief and private volunteer organizations. The successes flowed from CA's linguistic skills and the enduring relationships from previous deployments to the region."<sup>21</sup> In fact, in the months prior to Hurricane Mitch, Army Reserve soldiers from the 350<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Command "conducted disaster preparation exercises

with their Central American counterparts. Fortunately, the exercises dealt with what to do when a hurricane hits.”<sup>22</sup>

The National Guard’s State Partnership Program (SPP), which began as a subset of NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP), is another tool for enhancing interoperability with the smaller nations of the Pacific theater. By establishing close relations between a state National Guard and an “adopted” country, this program encourages the development of long-term organizational and personal relationships between military and civic leaders. “The continuing state-to-host-country association provides a degree of consistency and continuity that would be difficult to attain through an extended association with an active component unit.”<sup>23</sup>

The program involves political and economic activities, in addition to its military core. Military liaison teams are assigned permanently in the host country to coordinate a variety of projects that involve shaping civil-military relations and expanding contact with regional and U.S. military forces.<sup>24</sup> Joint contact teams work with the military liaison team, the U.S. ambassador and the country team to further tailor engagement programs to the partner country’s needs. Traveling contact teams, focused on specific functional areas, are another component of SPP, and perhaps the one most applicable to small nations of the Asia-Pacific region. “One important goal of these teams is to help countries develop their internal military capabilities to the highest possible level of interoperability with other nations.”<sup>25</sup> Having linked 30 U.S. states with 27 countries of Europe, Central Asia, and Latin America, SPP was expanded recently to the Pacific Command, with approval of a partnership between the Philippines and Hawaii.<sup>26</sup>

Since its start in 1994, SPP has conducted exercises “involving peacekeeping skills, humanitarian aid, maritime search and rescue, command post exercises, convoy operations,



maritime embargo, air exercises, mine and countermine operations, and other aspects of military support to civilian authorities.”<sup>27</sup> Further use of this program in the Pacific could be another powerful tool for achieving many of the goals of theater engagement, including improving interoperability with smaller nations.

### **Engagement's Critics**

As one would expect with a program of this magnitude, peacetime military engagement has its critics. Some would argue that our engagement programs only serve to strengthen the grip of corrupt regimes over their oppressed people, as in the case of Indonesian military actions in East Timor. There have clearly been some setbacks in this regard and there will always be those who seek to misuse power, but the situation could be much worse in the absence of U.S. engagement. “The armed forces of Third World emerging democracies often share common problems which inhibit the transition to a fully functioning democracy: they are larger than they need to be and hence a drain on limited national resources, they are poorly trained and disciplined, they have poor human rights records...and they lack loyalty to their constitution as opposed to their immediate chain of command.”<sup>28</sup> Our engagement efforts give other nations the opportunity to interact with a military that operates effectively under civilian control, and is guided by the rule of law, concern for human rights, and democratic principles. By working to shape modestly-sized, defensively-oriented forces for MOOTW missions, U.S. engagement efforts can enhance the professionalism of a partner nation's military and enhance the nation's stability.

With smaller defense budgets and rising operational tempo for our forces, some critics question the wisdom of devoting resources to theater engagement. Part of the problem is the difficulty of quantifying the value of deterrence and other benefits of engagement

described earlier in this paper. Both critics and proponents would agree, however, that we should keep engagement efforts at a level that will not erode the readiness of our forces for their primary war-fighting mission. This adds incentive to seek cost-effective alternatives like the Coast Guard, Special Forces and Reserve units to accomplish engagement objectives. The importance of using our forces wisely also argues for structuring as much engagement activity as possible to fulfill ongoing training requirements. Although addressing JTF *Aquila*'s relief efforts following Hurricane Mitch, the following comments can be applied to many peacetime military engagement activities:

Operation *Fuerte Apoyo* exercised units rather than distracting them from combat training. Deployment and on-the-ground operations were fantastic training opportunities for logistic, engineer, medical and aviation units to operate in an austere, real-world environment and perform wartime missions. The majority of units deployed in Central America did what they would do during wartime, training as they would fight. Units conducted rapid deployment; reception, staging, onward movement and integration operations; established their bases and life support; and rapidly transitioned to conduct operations.<sup>29</sup>

If CINCPAC shifts some of his theater engagement efforts to smaller, more affordable units, another group of critics will argue that this indicates a lack of U.S. commitment to Asian-Pacific security. This is a valid concern since the nations of the region are highly sensitive to the ebb and flow of U.S. presence. Our "military engagement activities are very important to recipient nations. A seemingly less-significant activity such as a ship visit has great visibility in a small country."<sup>30</sup> Any reduction in the level of combat forces assigned to exercises and other engagement missions should be carefully explained in an effort to prevent diplomatic misperceptions. We will need to reassure Asian-Pacific nations that this does not signal a U.S. pullback from the region.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

It is not enough just to be joint, when conducting future operations. We must find the most effective methods for integrating and improving interoperability with allied and coalition partners. Although our Armed Forces will maintain decisive unilateral strength, we expect to work in concert with allied and coalition forces in nearly all of our future operations, and increasingly, our procedures, programs, and planning must recognize this reality.<sup>31</sup>

To achieve the goals outlined in this quote from Joint Vision 2010, we will need a comprehensive and well-managed theater engagement program. CINCPAC has a robust Theater Engagement Plan and is setting priorities and making the tough choices necessary to optimize use of the limited resources available to him. Major challenges include incompatible communications, which hinders interoperability, and sustaining an aggressive engagement plan in the face of continued high operational demands and force reductions.

Effective communications are a vital part of any major operation, especially if multinational forces are participating. If an acceptable degree of interoperability is to be maintained, the U.S. must lead the way to solve the chronic problem of inadequate communications connectivity. The U.S. Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region recognizes the importance of maintaining interoperability with allied and partner nations, and points the way to achieving it "through joint research and development, combined doctrine development and training, and a focus on the compatibility of systems."<sup>32</sup> Establishing reliable communications with allies and coalition partners should be a major element of the U.S. push toward Network Centric Warfare. If we fail to create network architecture and technical standards that allow us to communicate with partner nations, our high-tech "Revolution in Military Affairs" threatens to expand interoperability gaps and reduce our effectiveness in a wide realm of combined operations.

To sustain an effective engagement program in spite of force reductions and high operational tempo, CINCPAC should expand the use of smaller, more affordable engagement teams, such as those from the U.S. Coast Guard, SOCPAC, and the National Guard's State Partnership Program. Their efforts should be focused on training partner nations for roles in MOOTW, where they would be best able to support regional security coalitions.

The forces and missions of the U.S. Coast Guard closely match those of many foreign navies. The Coast Guard can help these navies develop operational skills that will contribute to maritime security in peacetime and in a multitude of MOOTW scenarios. Similarly, SOF engagement efforts emphasize the skills and interoperability needed to conduct likely military missions at the lower end of the spectrum of conflict. CINCPAC should also look for opportunities to expand the excellent State Partnership Program.

Theater engagement gives smaller Asian-Pacific nations a valuable opportunity to interact and train with U.S. forces. By ensuring the training we provide is tailored to their resources and capabilities, we can optimize the effectiveness of these small nations if future events bring us together in a coalition. This approach might enable our high-end combatants to focus on their primary war-fighting mission, while our partners handle many of the important roles in maritime interdiction, humanitarian assistance, and peacekeeping.

Engagement in the Asia-Pacific region demonstrates U.S. commitment to regional security, enhances our access to vital bases of operation, fosters interoperability among diverse forces, and helps build a foundation for coalition response to future crises. We can maintain interoperability with the region's smaller nations through a sustainable theater engagement program focused on preparing these nations to operate at the lower end of the spectrum of conflict.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Robert S. Chase and others, "Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy," Foreign Affairs, January/February 1996, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin E. Mulcahey, Application of the UNITAS Model to the Western Pacific (Newport, RI: Strategic Research Department of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies, 1993), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Commander Task Force Seven One Two, "CARAT 99 Planning and Execution Lessons Learned," Record message traffic date-time group 170730Z SEP 99, para. 6.B.

<sup>4</sup> Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Military Strategy of the United States of America (Washington: 1997), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Commander Task Force Seven One Two, para. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Mulcahey, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>11</sup> John McClain, "Theater Engagement Planning—An Operational Art: How CINC's Shape the International Environment," (Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1999), 13.

<sup>12</sup> Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, The Battle for the Falklands (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1983), 324.

<sup>13</sup> Commander Task Force Seven One Two, para. 6.A.

<sup>14</sup> "Department of Defense: International Military Legal Education and Training," The DISAM Journal, Winter 1998/1999, 123.

<sup>15</sup> Richard D. Kohout and others, Looking Out to 2020: Trends Relevant to the Coast Guard (Alexandria, Virginia: Center for Naval Analyses, 1997), 68.

<sup>16</sup> Department of Defense and Department of Transportation, Memorandum of Agreement Between the Department of Defense and the Department of Transportation on the Use of U.S. Coast Guard Capabilities and Resources in Support of the National Military Strategy (Washington: 1995), Annex D – Peacetime Military Engagement.

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- <sup>17</sup> Todd Lafleur, "LE3 Deployment Summary for CARAT '99—Malaysia, 30 JUN-01 JUL 99," (Coast Guard Pacific Area Training Team, Alameda, CA: undated), 1.
- <sup>18</sup> Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict), United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement (Washington: 1998), 33.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 34.
- <sup>21</sup> Virgil L. Packett II and Timothy M. Gilhool, "Diplomacy by Other Means: JTF *Aquila* Responds to Hurricane Mitch," Military Review, March-April 2000, 83.
- <sup>22</sup> "Citizen-Soldier Civil Affairs Assist in Hurricane Mitch Recovery," The Officer, April 1999, 52.
- <sup>23</sup> John R Groves, Jr., "PfP and the State Partnership Program: Fostering Engagement and Progress," Parameters, Spring 1999, 48.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., 46.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 47.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 46.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., 49.
- <sup>28</sup> Paul C. Marks, "Security Assistance Training for Emerging Democracies: An Approach," The DISAM Journal, Winter 1999-2000, 79.
- <sup>29</sup> Packett and Gilhool, 84.
- <sup>30</sup> Ralph R. Steinke and Brian L. Tarbet, "Theater Engagement Plans: A Strategic Tool or a Waste of Time?" Parameters, Spring 2000, 79.
- <sup>31</sup> Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Vision 2010 (Washington: undated), 9.
- <sup>32</sup> Secretary of Defense, The U.S. Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region (Washington: 1998). 9.

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